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**Observation/Reflection #2: Eyes in the Back of Your Head: Observing Student Actions**

From a seat in the rear of the room, observe your students and take notes on what they are doing while the teacher is presenting in the front of the room, while they are supposed to be taking notes, doing seatwork, and/or when they are working in the lab. Look closely at each student for a range of behaviors, and resist the temptation on only see what you expect. Note especially what is happening furthest from the teacher.  
  
What strategies are used by your CT to encourage students to attend and engage? Watch carefully how your CT moves around the room. Draw a map of the classroom and sketch a path showing (approximately) this movement.  
  
How important is student engagement to your view of how you will teach? What strategies will you employ to encourage student engagement? How will use your proximity to provide feedback and manage student behavior?

The second class of the day is 10th grade college preparatory biology. I observed a lesson introducing the properties of water molecules, acids and bases. The CT was in the front of the room for most of the lesson. The students came in and sat in new seating which they had chosen earlier in the week. The front of the classroom had three large tables with 8 chairs around each table. A group of 8 boys sat in the table farthest from the teacher. Only 5 students sat in the middle and another 7 (boys and girls) sat around the third table. I sat behind the all boys table which was farthest from the teacher.

Teacher

S me

The material was new to most of the students yet vital to their understanding of much of the content for the rest of the year. The CT wanted students to have accurate diagrams in their science notebooks depicting the chemical formulas of water, acids and bases, and their ions. She spent the lesson at the front of the room showing the students molecular diagrams of each example and having them copy them into their notebooks. She frequently cued the students about specific information that needed to be in their notebooks. Most of the class remained engaged except for the two boys sitting farthest from the CT at the end of the group table directly in front of me. Student S was restless for most of the lecture. He frequently did not follow the directions of the CT such as putting accurate chemical names on the diagrams. He was the only one to leave the room to use the bathroom after asking permission twice (the first time was denied because the CT was explaining a process to the class). He frequently picked up the ruler he had been given (for making lines in his science notebook) and struck his friend with it. The other student next to him reminded him that he was not being respectful but he continued his behaviors. After class, I asked my CT to tell me about student S. She knew that he had been restless and was considering changing his seat but also said that he had scored one of the highest grades on their last quiz.

Student engagement is critical to their understanding of the content. I hope to engage students by making the content as interesting as possible. Sometimes the goal may not be as amendable to fun as other classes. The lesson on acids and bases was needed to make sure every student had the prerequisite knowledge for an upcoming lab. Unfortunately, this lesson did not have a lot of variety and students were getting restless toward the end. I think one way to keep all students engaged could have been to involve students more in the giving of the lesson. Having students, especially restless ones, come up to the room to demonstrate with a model what the components of the formula were may have helped capture the classes’ attention. Maybe having their partner check the diagram in their notebook for accuracy would have helped motivate students to be more complete with their note taking. Having a lesson that allows more freedom from the front of the room (such as using models instead of power point illustrations) may allow the teacher to move about the room and use proximity to encourage better behavior. Having students work in groups with models to demonstrate the formulas as the teacher circulated would have been more interesting for the students and allowed the teacher to access understanding and check on notebook accuracy. I think having the disruptive students closer to the front of the room (where the teacher spends the most time) would be a big improvement. I will be interested to find out if Student S has a new seat next week.